



مكتب
الشارقة صديقة للطفل
SHARJAH
CHILD FRIENDLY OFFICE

BLOCK BY BLOCK WORKSHOP

SHARJAH, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

DESIGNING CHILD-FRIENDLY CITIES



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication was made possible with the funding and support from Sharjah Child Friendly Office (SCFO) under the Child Friendly Urban Planning Project (2018 – 2022) in collaboration with SUPC, UN-Habitat and UNICEF. We would like to thank who contributed to the publication of the guideline from:

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CONTENT

UN-HABITAT GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME	4
OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME	6
PROGRAMME FOCUS AREAS	7
BLOCK BY BLOCK METHODOLOGY	8
USING MINECRAFT FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	12
THE CASE OF SHARJAH	14
SHARJAH CHILD FRIENDLY OFFICE	16
SHARJAH URBAN PLANNING COUNCIL	16
MAIN OBJECTIVE	17
MUWAILEH	17
BLOCK BY BLOCK WORKSHOP	20
METHODOLOGY	22
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	23
MINECRAFT IDEAS	24
GROUPS MASTERPLAN	26
LIST OF IDEAS	28
PRIORITY LIST	32
FINAL MODEL	38
QUOTES	48
WAY FORWARD AND NEXT STEPS	49

A "CHILD" IS ANY PERSON UNDER THE AGE OF 18 (UNICEF)

“Child Friendly City”

According to UNICEF, a “*Child Friendly City*” is a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to fulfilling child rights as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is a city or community where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions. Thus, a “Child Friendly City” is a city that is fit for all.

A “Child Friendly City” is a city or community aiming to become a place where children:

1. Are safe and protected from exploitation, violence and abuse;
2. Have a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for;
3. Have access to essential services;
4. Experience quality, inclusive and participatory education and skills development;
5. Express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them;
6. Participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life;
7. Live in a clean, unpolluted and safe environment with access to green spaces;
8. Meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves;
9. Have a fair chance at life regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability.

UN-HABITAT GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME







In 2012, UN-Habitat launched its **Global Public Space Programme** which is now **active in more than 30 cities** across the world.

The programme's objective is to promote public spaces as a keystone for sustainable cities in order to ensure good quality of life for all.

This is done through **policy guides, capacity building, knowledge sharing, carrying out advocacy work and actual implementation.**

The Programme assists cities to determine their needs for public space through mapping exercises and city-wide public space strategies as well as urban development frameworks.

Together with local government and civil society partners, **the programme has to date implemented around eighty-five concrete public space upgrading projects** selected through annual expressions of interests. The Programme's work has been proven to be effective in achieving social, economic and environmental benefits. The good policy and practices that the programme have on a global level is shared through a network of more than hundred partner organizations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The objectives of the Global Public Space Programme are:

- To promote public space as an important element for creating sustainable cities, improving the quality of life of urban citizens, and as a key lever in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, continuing the dialogue following Habitat III and for monitoring the implementation of the SDG 11.7.1
- To consolidate knowledge, good approaches, tools and methodologies on public space and make these accessible, particularly to local government partners.
- To engage the broader network of partners and public space practitioners in the global promotion of good policies and practice on public space.
- To demonstrate, through pilot projects and in partnership with cities, the importance of public spaces in achieving social, economic, environmental and other benefits to cities.

PROGRAMME FOCUS AREAS



THE PUBLIC SPACE ASSESSMENT

Collecting data on public spaces and developing city-wide strategies. This helps cities take a strategic action-oriented approach to public space protection and development and management and enables them to have a better understanding of the state of public spaces, what resources are required to manage these spaces and set goals to improve them.



CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTNERS

Bringing together a variety of civil society, academic and private sector partners to share knowledge and collaborate on projects that show the positive impact of public spaces on urban life.



PUBLIC SPACE UPGRADING

Providing financing and technical support to local governments and civil society organisations for public space upgrading projects. Projects are selected through a yearly call for expressions of interest. The spaces are geographically distributed with a focus on the Global South and use a participatory approach that engages the community and the users of the space in the design process, setting up the management frameworks and implementation.



DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

Using digital platforms, tools and innovative approaches for mapping, co-creation and participatory urban design. The Programme uses technologies such as Kobo Toolbox to map public spaces, the video-game Minecraft for co-creation and mixed reality for public participation and visualization.



STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Supporting governments in mainstreaming public space in National Urban Policies and developing public space frameworks, policies and legislation. Governments can recognize the importance of localized city-wide policies and the role they must play in developing and maximising public spaces in their cities.



CAPACITY BUILDING AND PLANNING GUIDELINES

Improving knowledge and building capacity to deal with public space issues at the neighbourhood, city and national levels. Development of contextualized and thematic guidelines tailored to the need of cities and provision of training and capacity building.

BLOCK BY BLOCK METHODOLOGY





Participants playing on Minecraft © UN-Habitat / Jose Chong

**"I ALWAYS SAY,
THE PLACE DOES
NOT MAKE US; WE
HAVE TO MAKE THE
PLACE."**

— Lucinda Terrazas Luján, community advocate



WHY PUBLIC SPACE?

The importance of high-quality public space is recognized both in the Sustainable Development Goals and in the New Urban Agenda.

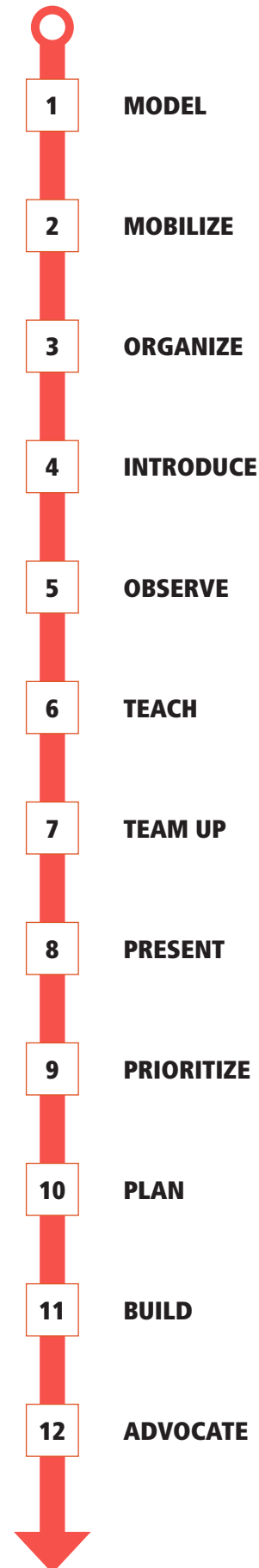
Public space helps build social cohesion, bring communities and people together, and strengthen social ties. Inclusive public spaces are especially important for the urban poor, who often live in overcrowded housing lacking basic services. Diverse, vibrant streets and public spaces improve safety and economic opportunity for all, and well-maintained networks of public spaces improve physical and mental health by encouraging physical activity and reducing stress. A well-designed matrix of streets and public spaces encourages walking and cycling, and improves safety by reducing vehicle traffic and speeds.

UN-Habitat's Global Public Space Programme works with national and local governments and other partners in more than 40 countries to make public spaces more inclusive, safe and accessible. We put a special focus on countries and cities with a large informal sector, who require investment in public spaces the most.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The Block by Block Methodology is specifically designed to actively involve people who don't typically have a voice in public projects—from women and kids to elders, disabled residents, and refugees. Block by Block gives local residents the training, the tools, and the platform to participate and contribute their ideas. The outcome is co-created public spaces that serve the needs of all kinds of residents, a deeply ingrained sense of ownership, and, ultimately, stronger communities.

HOW IT WORKS



USING MINECRAFT FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Minecraft is a sandbox computer game originally launched in 2011 by the Swedish gaming studio Mojang, later bought by Microsoft. By late 2018, over 154 million copies had been sold across all platforms, making it the second best-selling video game of all time. The creative mode of Minecraft allows players to easily build structures out of textured cubes in a three-dimensional generated world, with the benefit of being able to construct together through the multiplayer setting. Minecraft can perhaps best be imagined as a sort of 'digital Lego' which the gaming community uses to build different structures and games, including cities. In Minecraft, players interact with the game world by placing various types of coloured blocks in a three-dimensional environment with the purpose of building creative structures, such as buildings and cities.

Starting in 2012, UN-Habitat developed the Block by Block methodology in which Minecraft is used as a simple sketching tool that enables anyone - even those with limited computer knowledge or low education - to design neighbourhoods or public spaces with limited training. Since 2013, UN-Habitat has used the Block by Block methodology in nearly 100 projects in 36 countries and territories. Through three-day participatory design workshops, UN-Habitat and partners bring people together to visualize their urban design ideas in Minecraft and present these to city authorities and local government officials. The Minecraft designs are then used as part of the process of implementing real public space improvement projects.

Observations carried out from the conducted projects indicates that using technology as a participatory

tool for planning and design is a successful means to include non-traditional stakeholders in a bottom-up decision-making processes. The lessons and experiences from using Minecraft showcase how inclusive the tool can be by making sure youth, women and girls are involved in the planning process from the onset. The game promotes creativity, innovation and visual learning, helps encourage dialogue between different groups and opinions and contributes to the development of important skills such as collaboration, public speaking and negotiation as well as giving vulnerable groups a voice. For many participants, this is the first time they have publicly expressed opinions about public issues, and many say that the Block by Block process makes it easier to communicate their interests and ideas.

More information about the Block by Block Foundation can be found on the official website.



www.blockbyblock.org

Check out some of the Minecraft models here:
<https://sketchfab.com/blockbyblock>





- Les pays où le programme est actif
- Évaluation des espaces publics
- Projets pilotes et participation numérique
- Stratégies, politiques and lois
- Renforcement des capacités et lignes directrices

THE GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME HAS:

Completed
85
 PUBLIC SPACE
 UPGRADING
 PROJECTS

Worked in
36
 COUNTRIES

engaged
+20,000
 CITIZENS

THE CASE OF SHARJAH

Sharjah is the third largest of seven Emirates in the UAE and the only one to overlook both the Arabian Gulf Coast and the Gulf of Oman. Sharjah is a leading Emirate in several areas and was declared as a UNESCO Cultural capital of the Arab World in 1998.

Having a population of 1.4 million inhabitants, Sharjah covers approximately 2,600 square kilometres making it low in density.

Sharjah has been crowned the first city in the world to receive the UN's prestigious title after successfully meeting the new international requirements and criteria launched by UNICEF's global CFC initiative to ensure the fulfilment of children's rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Sharjah in numbers



2,600 km²

Area



+2.7% in 2019

Growth Rate



1.4 million people

2015 population estimate



538 people/km²

Density





SHARJAH CHILD FRIENDLY OFFICE

SHAPING URBANIZATION FOR CHILDREN, ACTION PLAN URBAN PLANNING TOWARDS A CHILD-RESPONSIVE SHARJAH

In 2016, Sharjah Child Friendly Office (SCFO) and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office conducted a baseline assessment for the Emirate of Sharjah - mainly in the areas of health, education, participation, and social services to evaluate current practices and policies in these areas according to the original Child Friendly Cities Framework for Action. The assessment study highlighted the major achievements and a high-level commitment to children's wellbeing as well as addressed existing challenges. An action plan was developed with three main objectives:

- Increase understanding and awareness of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative and child rights principles;
- Address equity and introduce measures to overcome barriers that lead to the exclusion of certain groups of children;
- Ensure that all children in Sharjah are actively participating in the community and that their views are considered in matters affecting their lives.

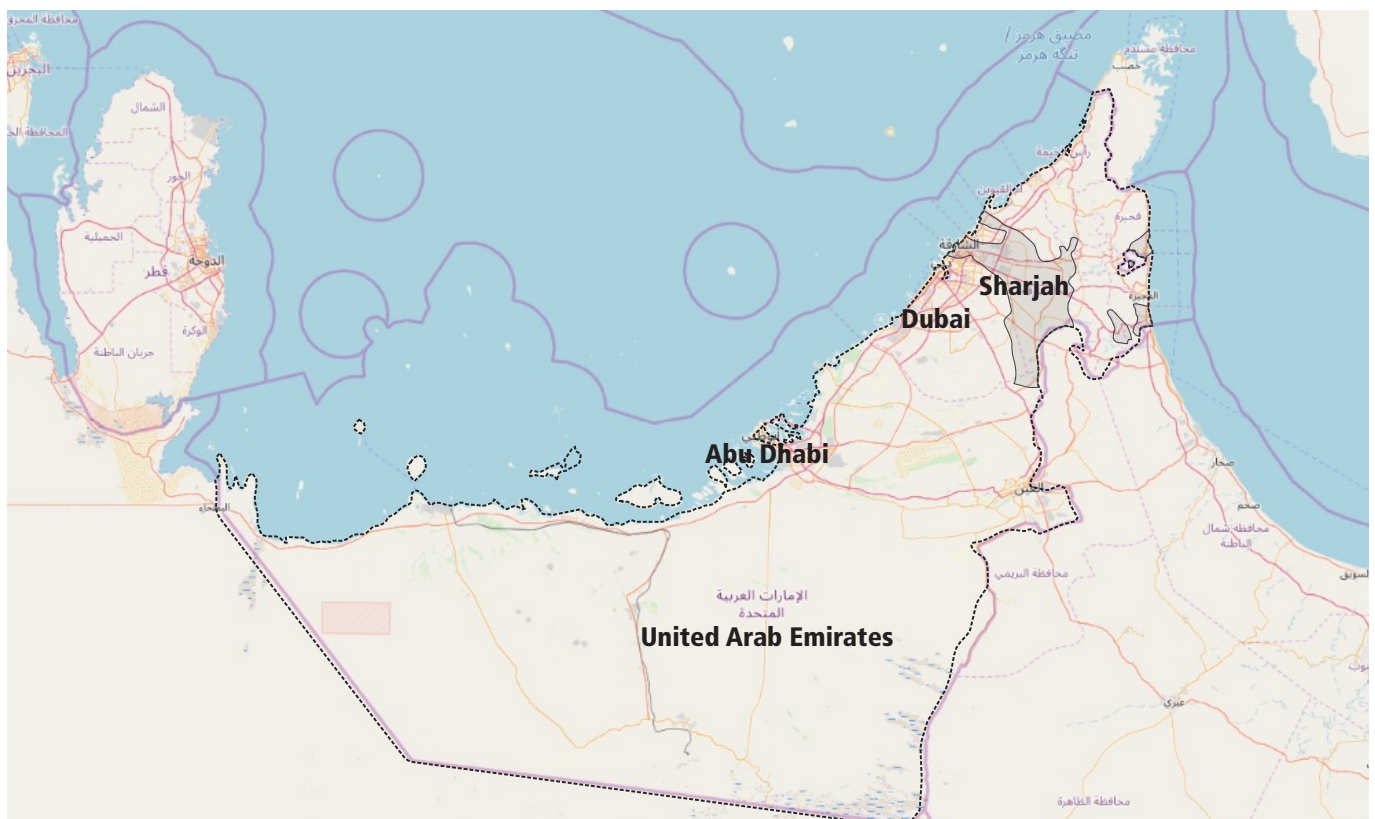
SHARJAH URBAN PLANNING COUNCIL

SHAPING URBANIZATION FOR CHILDREN, TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN SHARJAH

Founded in 2006, the Sharjah Urban Planning Council was formed in 2014, by virtue of the Amiri Decree No. 5 issued by His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, within the framework of the efforts being made to keep pace with the overall development in the Emirate of Sharjah.

The council aims to develop a comprehensive strategy for urban development and infrastructure projects and oversee the preparation, execution, follow-up and update of the strategic plans for government entities concerned in urban development, infrastructure and environment issues.

SUPC is committed to strategic planning, implementing and maintaining projects through proper regulations and guidelines that perceptibly improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of Sharjah. At the centre of these developments is a child-friendly city carefully customized to facilitate the lives of its younger generations. The optimal integration of family values, education and the environment, to create a healthy and distinctive lifestyle.



MAIN OBJECTIVE

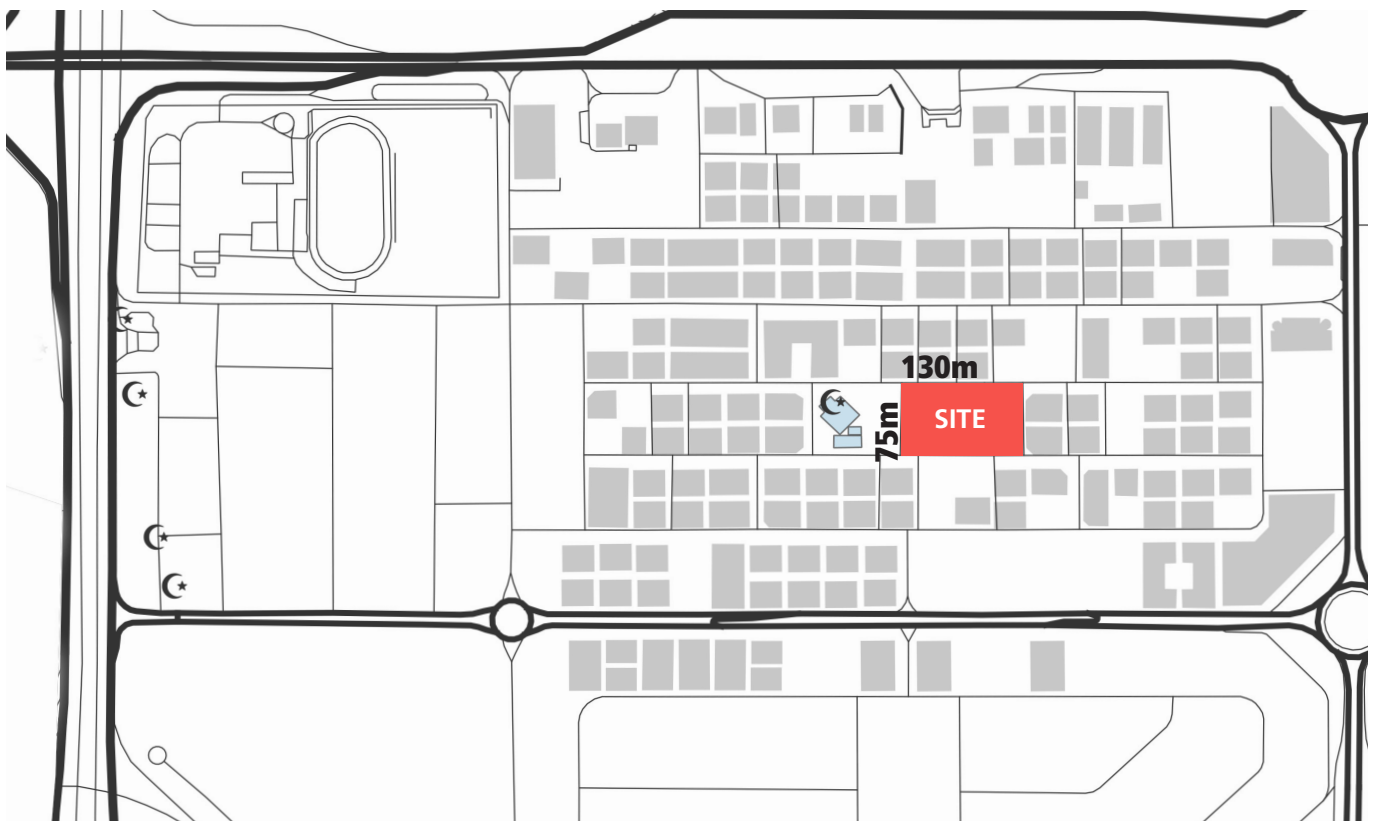
The objective of Participatory child-friendly public space planning and design is to evaluate the state of public open spaces in Sharjah (quantity, quality, accessibility, basic amenities, design, and other features of public spaces, which impact the usability and user experience) and propose strategic recommendations, particularly to improve safety and security, accessibility and inclusion for children.

- Mobilize the users and the kids of the area in finding solutions for problems related to the public space;
- Assure social cohesion among different social groups;
- Ensure the participation of girls and boys in the design process;
- Design the space to become more accessible, safe and inclusive;
- Integrate the project into its surrounding; and
- Translate the needs of the community into design interventions.

MUWAILEH

As compared to other communities in Sharjah, Muwaileh is considered a quieter suburb. The neighbourhood consists of low-rise buildings which range from three to seven floors with commercial activities on the ground floor. Accordingly, the community offers new rental apartments at below average rental rates within Sharjah. Most areas have sandy lots which have been turned into make-shift parking lots.

The selected site is currently vacant and is surrounded by residential buildings and the Mosque from the western side. Residents, visitors and users of the Mosque are using the site as a parking lot, an informal playground to play football and a space to pray outside.



COMMERCE

RESIDENTIAL

VACANT



7,200 M²
Area of the selected site



NO SHADING

PARKING

**SHADED AREA
OF THE MOSQUE**

BLOCK BY BLOCK WORKSHOP





Brainstorming session with the kids during the workshop © SUPC

METHODOLOGY

Below are the activities held during the workshop:



Introduction to public space

The importance, the different types and the challenges related to public spaces.

Introduction to the project

General information about the site as well as highlighting the issues and challenges related to the selected public space.



Brainstorming

The participants were divided into groups of mixed ages and gender in means to raise the issues related to the site and find solutions



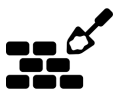
Training

How to use Minecraft (basic commands) and how to design public spaces

HOW TO PLAY?



- LIST OF COMMANDS**
- LEFT CLICK: DESTROY
 - RIGHT CLICK: BUILD
 - W: GO FORWARD
 - S: GO BACKWARDS
 - D: TO THE RIGHT
 - A: TO THE LEFT
 - SPACE BAR:
 - ONE CLICK: JUMP
 - TWO TIMES HOLD: FLY
 - SHIFT: GO TO GROUND SLOWLY
 - E: OPEN INVENTORY
 - 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 Or Scroll: CHOOSE BLOCKS
 - T: OPEN CHAT / CONVERSATION
 - /time set day: SET THE HOUR TO DAYLIGHT
 - /weather clear: STOP RAIN



Designing

The participants were divided into 16 teams with 3 to 4 people each. They addressed the challenges of the site through designing on Minecraft.



Presentation of ideas

The kids presented their ideas to UN-Habitat, UNICEF, SCFO and the wider audience.



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

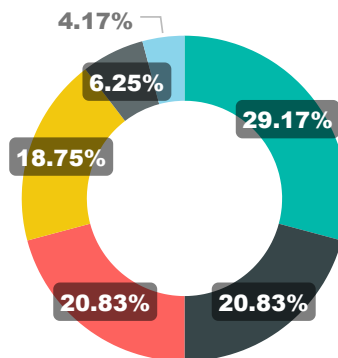
Gender

● Male ● Female



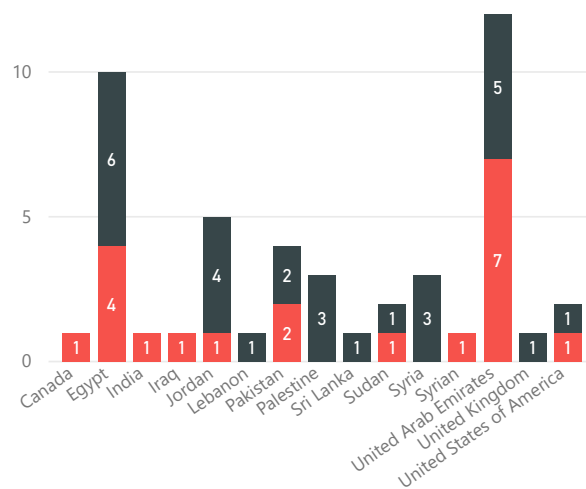
Age

● 10 ● 11 ● 8 ● 9 ● 12 ● 14



Nationality and gender distribution

Gender ● Female ● Male



MINECRAFT IDEAS

40+ ideas

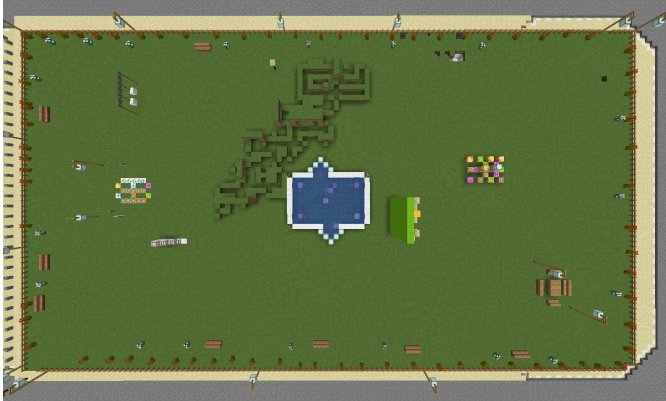
GROUPS

#	name
1	We talk with our hands
2	The dream land
3	Fun for everyone
4	SMS
5	Tiddly toddlers
6	The amusement park
7	Phoenix
8	Gamers
9	Minecraft Pro
10	Minecraft Explorers
11	Crafters
12	Arcade
13	Game Shakers
14	Hackers
15	Play area
16	Flag





GROUPS MASTERPLAN



#1 - *We talk with our hands*



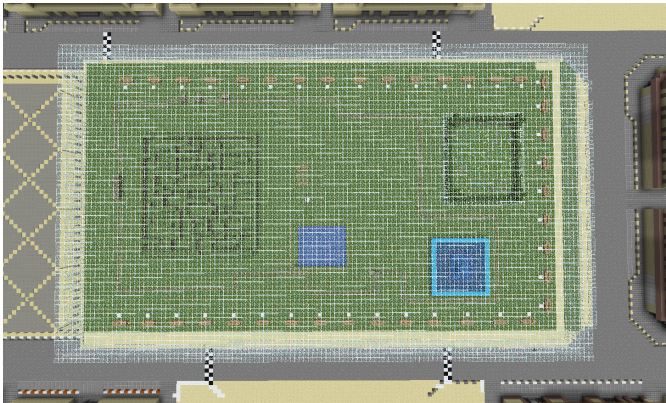
#2 - *The dream land*



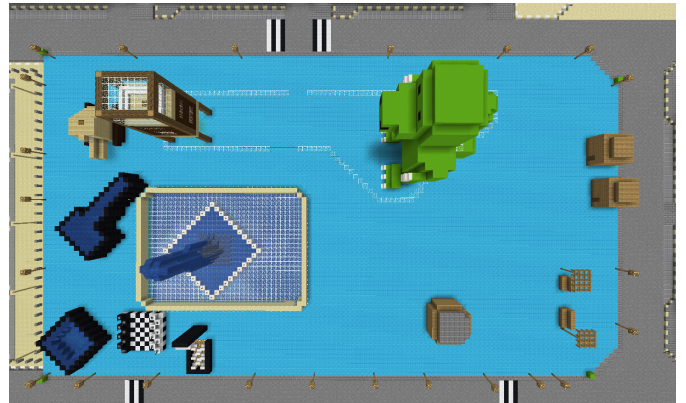
#3 - *Fun for everyone*



#4 - *SMS*



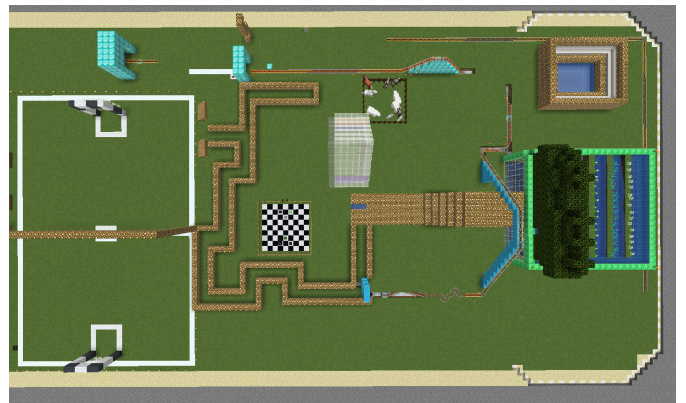
#5 - *Tiddly toddlers*



#6 - *The amusement park*



#7 - *Phoenix*



#8 - *Gamers*



#9 - Minecraft Pro



#10 - Minecraft Explorers



#11 - Crafters



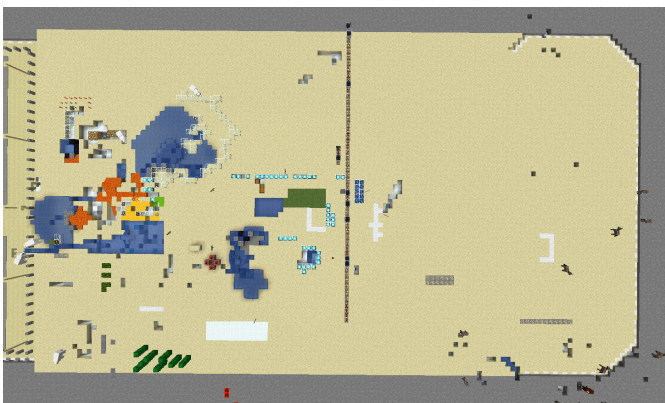
#12 - Arcade



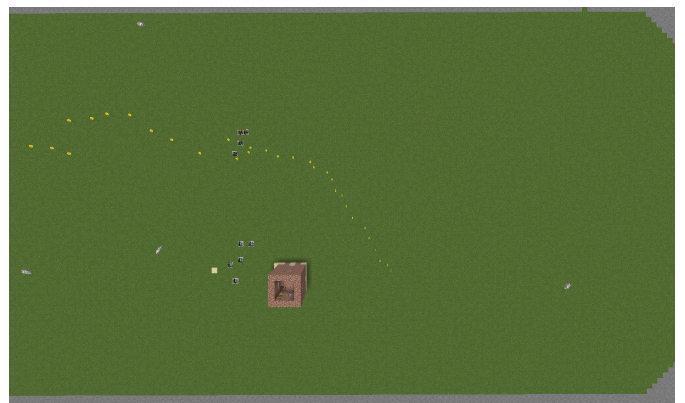
#13 - Game Shakers



#14 - Hackers



#15 - Play area

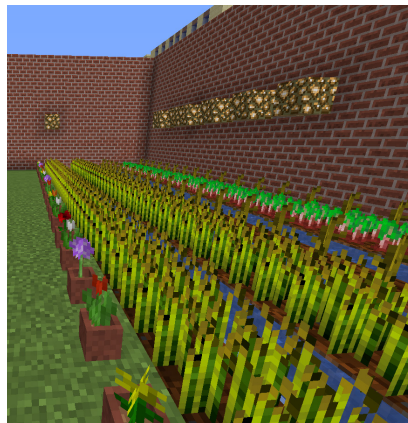


#16 - Flag

LIST OF IDEAS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Air Conditioned room | 30 | Pool |
| 2 | Arcade | 31 | Resting area |
| 3 | ATM Machine | 32 | Rubber Floor |
| 4 | Basketball court | 33 | Safe Crossings / zebra crossings |
| 5 | Benches | 34 | Sand pit |
| 6 | Bicycle rental | 35 | Security Station |
| 7 | Chess Area | 36 | See-saw |
| 8 | Climbing wall | 37 | Shades |
| 9 | Cycle Lane | 38 | Sidewalk / Pathways |
| 10 | Defined Entrance / Gate | 39 | Sign Language learning |
| 11 | Expression area / Exhibition / Painting | 40 | Signages |
| 12 | Fence | 41 | Skateboard park |
| 13 | Flowers | 42 | Slides |
| 14 | Football court | 43 | Solar Panels |
| 15 | Fountain / Waterscape | 44 | Sports area / Outdoor Gym / Yoga |
| 16 | Garden | 45 | Swings |
| 17 | Greenery / Grass ground | 46 | Tables (Outdoors) |
| 18 | Irrigation system | 47 | Toilets |
| 19 | Jogging track | 48 | Traffic lights |
| 20 | Kiosks / Food concession / Café / Stores | 49 | Train / Roller Coaster / Dino Coaster |
| 21 | Library / Reading Area | 50 | Trampoline |
| 22 | Lights | 51 | Trashbins |
| 23 | Market / agriculture | 52 | Tree House / Green house |
| 24 | Maze | 53 | Trees |
| 25 | Monkey bars | 54 | Volleyball court |
| 26 | Nursery / Clinic | 55 | Water point / Well |
| 27 | Parking | 56 | Zoo / livestock farming |
| 28 | Performing area / Open cinema / theatre | | |
| 29 | Playground | | |

FLOWERS

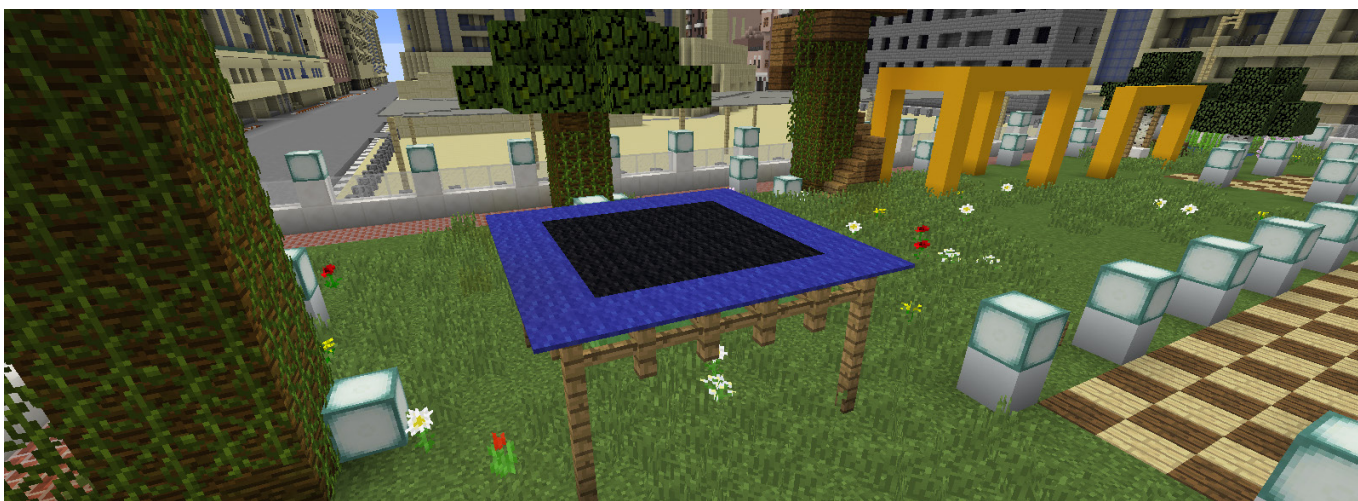


RESTING AREA

Including benches, shades and lights



TRAMPOLINE



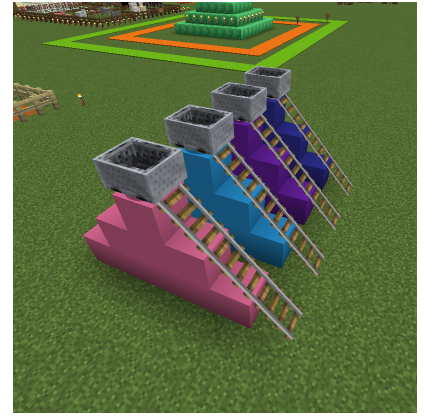
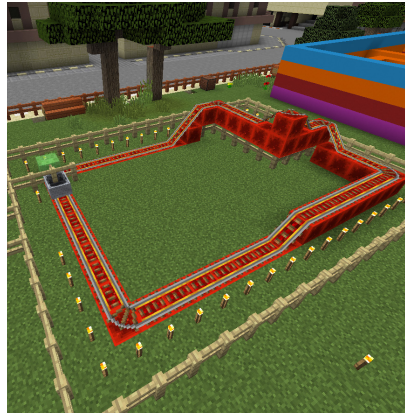
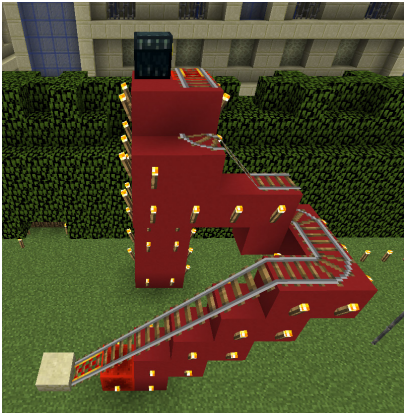
SIGNAGES

Directions: know where you are and where to go.



PLAYGROUND

Swings, slides and trains



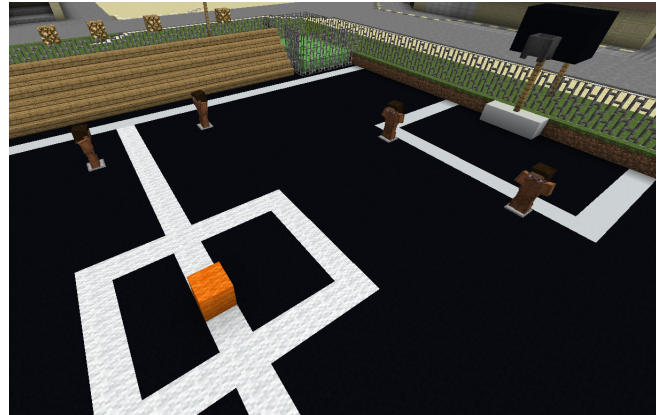
SHADES

Artificial shadows for comfort



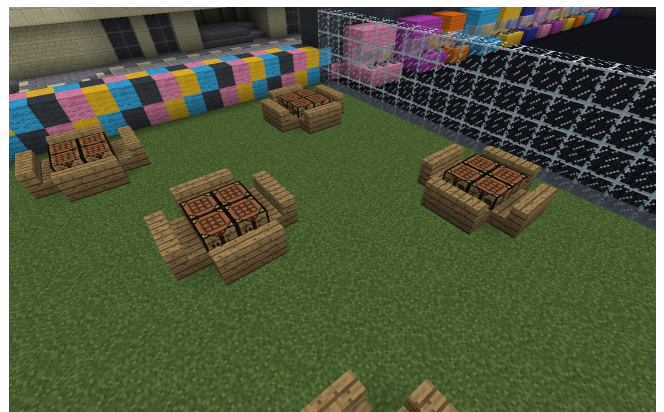
SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Chess, football, basketball and others

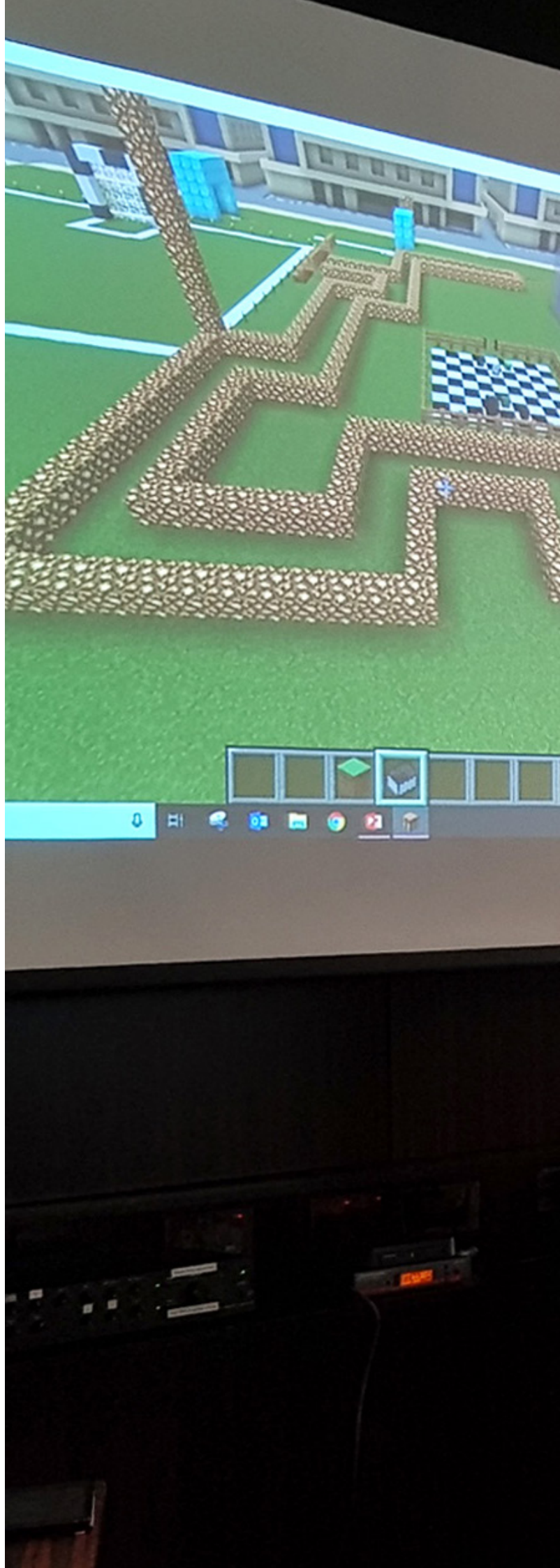


CAFÉ / FOOD AREA

Commercial activities inside the site to increase human presence



PRIORITY LIST





Participants presenting their ideas © UN-Habitat / Jose Chong.

RECURRENT INTERVENTIONS

During the two-day workshop, the kids worked on Minecraft to come up with design elements for Muwaileh site. Some of the ideas were repeated by most of the groups and are considered of high priority. The kids presented their design interventions to the wider audience including the Sharjah Child Friendly Office and Sharjah Urban Planning Council, the local government and other relevant stakeholders.

Some of the ideas were:

Lights were highlighted as a main priority by most of the group members. Kids installed lights inside the site and around the main entrances. Different types of lights were considered like the sensor and the solar lighting. The reason behind this interventions was to increase visibility and the perception of safety.

Greenery - Trees and flowers can transform the space into a more appealing and friendly environment. The participants wanted to improve the quality of the space and the perception of comfort by adding green coverage.

Fountain or waterscape reduced the effect of heat; especially in extreme temperature seasons. It is important to know that this type of intervention demand constant maintenance.

Resting areas for the users were seen in all the models of the kids. The participants allocated a space where people can relax, and parents can watch their kids play. The intervention was often seen shaded by a natural tree or an artificial structure. It is recommended to have the elements fixed on the ground so to avoid their displacement.

Cafés and food kiosks can keep the space vibrant and ensure human presence inside the site and owners can eventually support with the maintenance of the public space. It is recommended to locate these facilities at the edge of the site to serve both the public space and the pedestrians passing by the adjacent streets.

Playground including swings, see-saw, slides and **trampoline** where kids can play in solitary and in group. All groups expressed the need to include playful activities that can be used after school hours and during weekends. It is advisable to locate the play area away from the road limit for safety purposes.

Other considerations:

- **Trashbins** are important to keep the space clean, however it is crucial to collaborate with the municipality and think about the waste management system.
- **Signages** The participants added signages on the entrance as well as information screens that showcase the programming of events.
- **Rubber floor** covering the playground area is recommended for kids' safety
- **Shades** reduce the heat effect and bring comfort to the users; especially during daytime
- **Sign language** consideration was highlighted as a priority by a group of participants of hearing and speech difficulties. Universal design is very important when designing inclusive public spaces.





Final presentation © UN-Habitat / Jose Chong

FINAL MODEL



View on Sketchfab





MASTERPLAN - TOP VIEW



- 1 Lights
- 2 Greenery / Grass ground
- 3 Fountain / Waterscape
- 4 Benches
- 5 Kiosks / Food concession / Café / Stores
- 6 Flowers



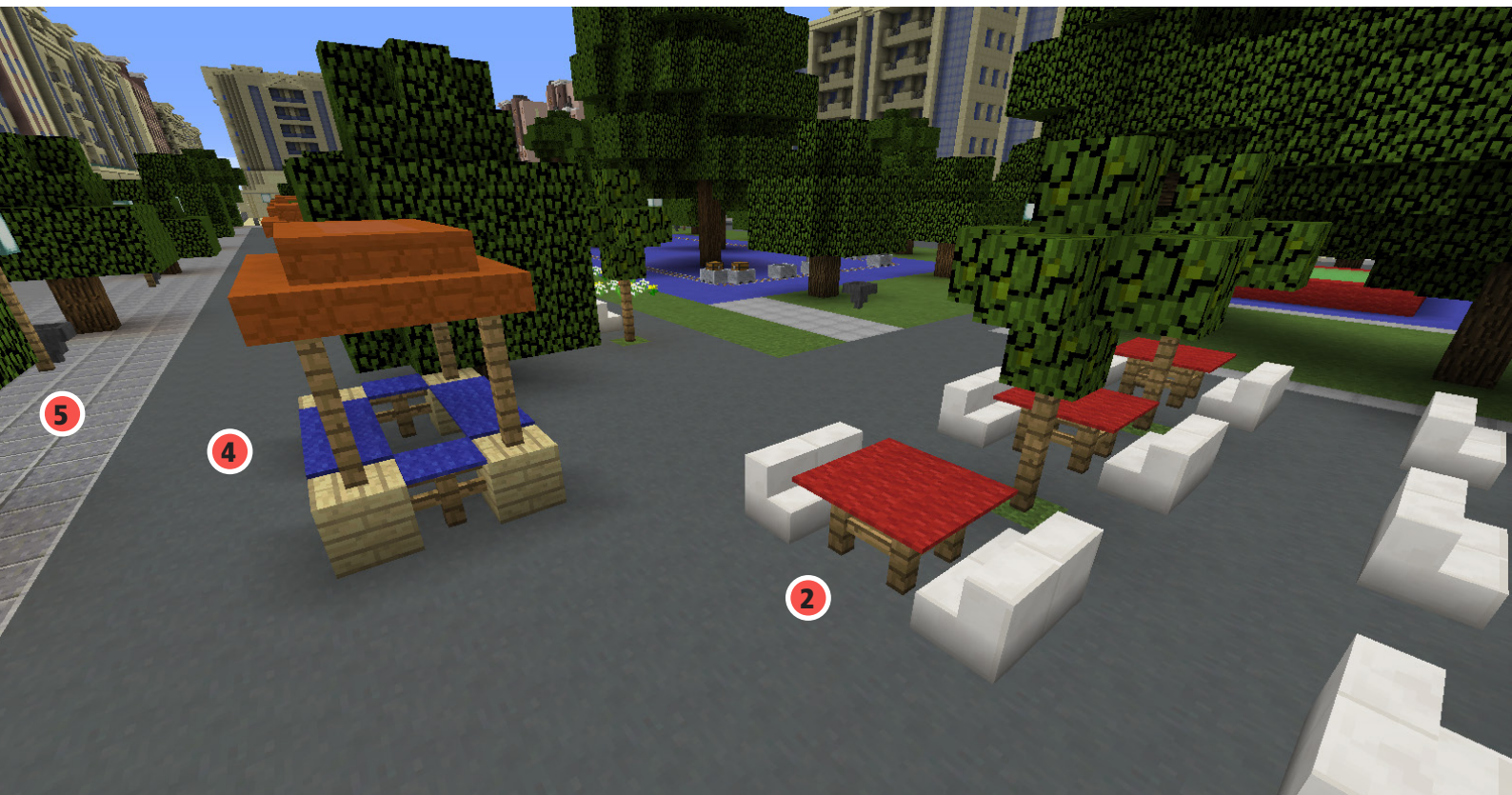
7 Trees

8 Playground

9 Safe zebra crossings

10 Trampoline

BIRDVIEW



1 Green coverage

2 Benches

3 Lights

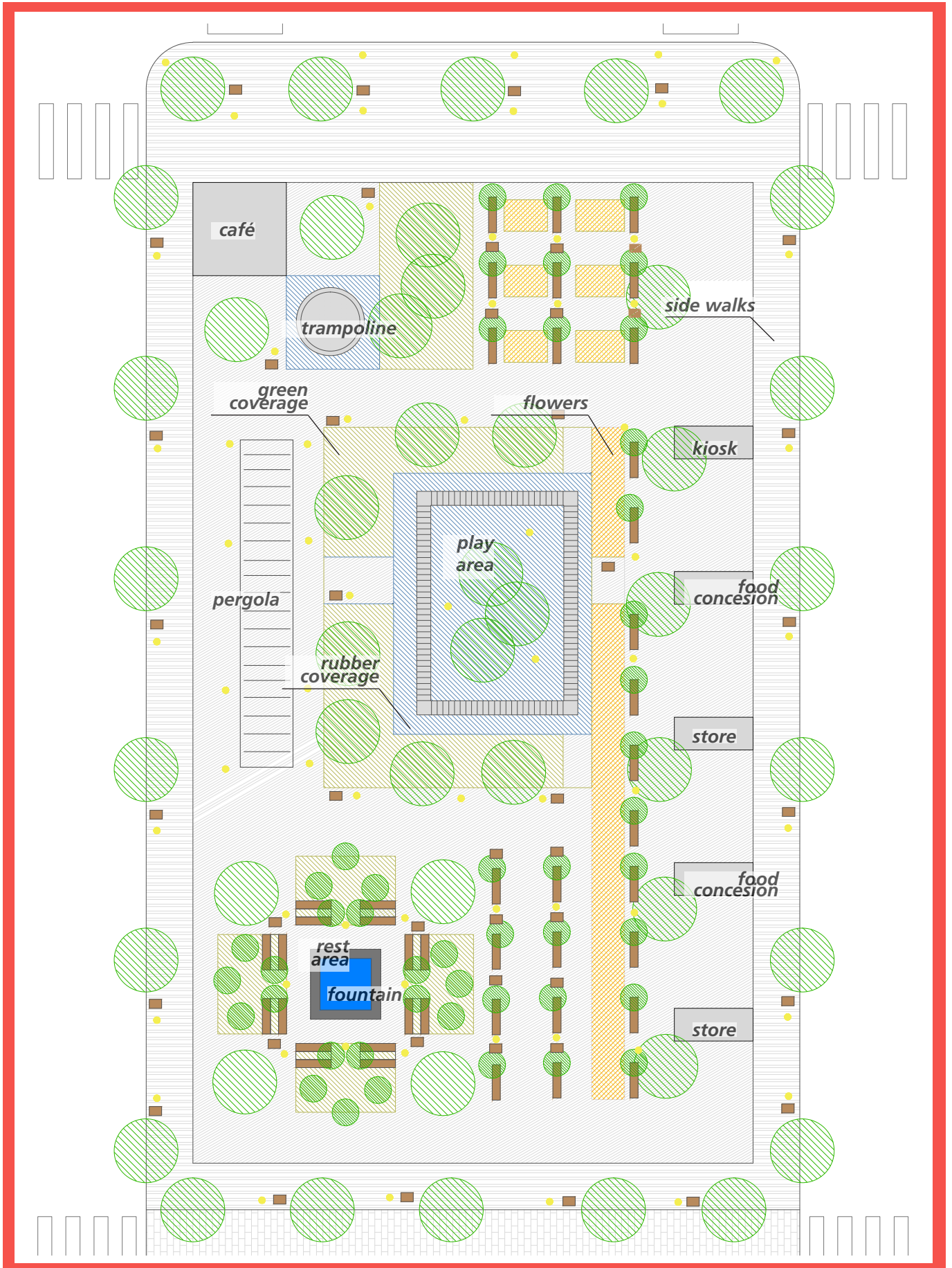
4 Food concession

5 Sidewalks

6 Fountain



CONCEPTUAL PROPOSAL



DAYLIGHT VIEW



- 1 Sidewalks
- 2 Pergola
- 3 Fountain
- 4 Play area
- 5 Food concessions
- 6 Resting area



NIGHT-TIME VIEW





QUOTES

“ We want to make sure universal design is considered in the planning of the park, especially for people with hearing and speech imparity ”

Rida Ismael
Participant

“ This is the most efficient public engagement we have had for city development projects ”

Amal Abdulla Alkhamis
Trainee

“ I learned how to be creative on Minecraft and how to better design public spaces. I can't wait to see my ideas being implemented ”

Ahmad Fouad
Participant

“ I had the chance to become an architect during this workshop and I designed many sports facilities ”

Participant

“ I learned how to work in group and communicate with my teammates to improve our neighbourhood park ”

Sarah Ahmed
Participant

WAY FORWARD AND NEXT STEPS

The Block by Block workshop highlighted the various ideas of the participants but most importantly it stressed on the missing needs that the community require in a public space. The interaction between the participants was remarkable and this showcase the true value of the participatory workshop that can gather everyone regardless of their background to design inclusive public spaces.

Following the workshop, a good workplan should be established with clear deadlines and a coordination mechanism should be set in place. A continuous discussion with all parties involved, SUPC, UNICEF, the department of public works, the municipality, and other relevant stakeholders is essential to understand ones' responsibilities and duties.

The architects or experts in charge of the design should translate the priorities of the kids found in this document into conceptual and technical drawings. The experts must take into consideration the Public Space Programme design principles in order to achieve a good quality public space. The design must consider accessibility, usage, comfort, facilities and green coverage. The design phase should go hand in hand with a phasing workplan and a budget breakdown.

A validation workshop with the participants as well as the residents will then take place to present the final design. After validation, the implementation (construction) should start and community members are advised to be engage in any way during this phase.

Main considerations:



Access



Use



Comfort



Facilities



Green coverage

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